

Sustainability of U.S. Government Projects in Afghanistan

**A Monograph
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Abstract

SUSTAINABILITY OF U.S. GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN

by Ms. Lorraine Sherman, U.S. Agency for International Development

Afghan nationals are not using or maintaining USG-funded development projects in two provinces/PRTs critical to U.S. success. As such, this monograph seeks to answer whether USG development projects in Afghanistan are sustainable. To do so, it analyzes how USG development projects are currently being used by Afghans in Nangarhar and Laghman. These two semi-permissive provinces have alternatively served as sanctuaries for the Taliban and al-Qaeda and as safe havens for USG troops conducting kinetic operations. Next, it assesses the three main reasons Afghans are not using or maintaining projects in these provinces. Then, it examines USG-funded development and sustainability historically, highlighting the differences between development delivery in permissive environments in the Balkans and non-permissive and semi-permissive environments in Afghanistan. Finally, the monograph considers the USG's role in implementing development in Afghanistan and answers whether development in an active war zone can be sustainable and enduring.

The primary finding of this monograph is that both non-permissive and semi-permissive provincial security environments pose nearly insurmountable challenges to sustainable development. The basic operating environment must be safe and secure for Afghans to use and maintain USG-funded projects in the long-term. Thus, the presence or influence of insurgents and the level of insurgent activity in those provinces must be minimal to nonexistent. Secondary findings suggest that systemic issues, like the lack of Afghan institutional capacity, endemic corruption, and bureaucratic confusion all work to restrict PRT personnel from incorporating Afghan government officials in long-term project design and planning. This leads to a lack of buy-in by the government which belies sustainability of these services in the long-term. It therefore bodes ill for the overall achievement of USG objectives within Afghanistan.

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Introduction

“Sustainability is the key. If the U.S. Government continues to spend millions of dollars on projects the Afghans are unable to sustain when we turn them over, then our investment will have been wasted.”¹

In order to meet its strategic objective of providing sustainable development in Afghanistan, the USG has spent \$336 billion from 2001 until 2010, \$60 billion of which was used for non-military reconstruction projects.² Despite this level of spending, early indications suggest that many Afghan nationals are not using or maintaining development projects in provinces critical to U.S. success.³ Afghans are not using or maintaining these USG-funded projects and services for three main reasons: (1) they have ill feelings toward the U.S. and/or align with the Taliban (they live in Taliban-controlled areas); (2) they do not support the Taliban but the projects are in Taliban-influenced areas and they feel unsafe using the services; or (3) they support USG efforts but with little or no input from Afghans in the design and planning of the projects, the projects are viewed as foreign-provided services and therefore are not being maintained. If this trend towards non-use holds, the long-term sustainability of these services is in jeopardy.

¹ Arnold Fields, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *News Release; Jan. 27, 2011; "SIGAR Contract Audit Shows \$49.2 Million at Risk of Waste,"* (Washington: The Office of Public Affairs, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2011).

² Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-2, “U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan is Progressing but Some Key Issues Merit Further Examination as Implementation Continues,” October 2010.

³ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-1, “Weaknesses in Reporting and Coordination of Development Assistance and Lack of Provincial Capacity Pose Risks to U.S. Strategy in Nangarhar Province,” October 2010. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-7, “Commander's Emergency Response Program in Laghman Province Provided Some Benefits, but Oversight Weaknesses and Sustainment Concerns, Led to Questionable Outcomes and Potential Waste.” January 2011.

From the U.S. Government (USG) perspective, it is vital that local and provincial communities within Afghanistan view development as a suitable and legitimate alternative to violence and/or support of violence. It is equally critical that development projects and programs be long-lasting. Simply defeating the Taliban regime is not enough. Even leaving a successor democratic government in place without improving Afghan institutional capacity is not enough. A stable Afghanistan requires well-trained police, robust military forces, critical upgrades in educational structures and health service delivery, and strong democratic and economic systems. Allowing these core institutions to remain weak may create a governance vacuum that will return the Taliban back into control. There is a high likelihood for trans-border instability given ethnic and ideological linkages among the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's south and east and Pakistan's north. The Taliban, al-Qaeda, or any number of like-minded militias could seize power in Pakistan, thereby also acquiring control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.⁴ These possibilities have framed the USG's strategic interest in the future of Afghanistan.

Accordingly, within Afghanistan, the USG formalized a "Whole of Government" approach where numerous USG agencies work together to improve Afghanistan's security, governance, institutional capacity, and economic development.⁵ This unity of effort to provide development assistance in Afghanistan is exhibited in the projects implemented by nine USG agencies throughout the country.⁶ The vast majority of these projects are initiated by the U.S.

⁴ Michael E. Hanlon, "How to Win Back Pakistan" Brookings Institute, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/1108_pakistan_ohanlon.aspx (accessed February 5, 2011). Despite allowing massive NATO logistics operations through its territory and helping the United States pursue al Qaeda operatives, Pakistan tolerates sanctuaries on its soil for the major insurgencies fighting in Afghanistan. These include the Afghan Taliban as well as the Haqqani and Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin networks. Thus, all three major Afghan insurgent groups have home bases in Pakistan. David E. Sanger, "Pakistan Strife Raises U.S. Doubt On Nuclear Arms," *The New York Times*, May 3, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/04/world/asia/04nuke.html?_r=1&hp (accessed February 5, 2011).

⁵ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. May 2010, 14.

⁶ USG agencies include the Departments of Defense, State, Commerce, Agriculture, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security as well as the Federal Aviation Administration and Agency for International Development.

military and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) located throughout Afghanistan.⁷ The projects range from the construction of bridges, roads, dams, hospitals, recreation centers, schools for boys, to training for girls and dental services.⁸ For the USG, sustainability of these projects is of critical importance.⁹ Sustainability demands that such projects are designed to ensure their impact endures. In other words, sustainability ensures that Afghans will use and maintain the projects and services long after USG personnel have left the country. USAID bases this mandate on its *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* that it uses to assist nations, some of which are in persistent conflict,¹⁰ in finding resources and solutions for long-lasting growth. Sustainability is one of the *Nine Principles*. The U.S. military's Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), which provides the funding mechanism for development-related projects pursuant to the stability operations portion of Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, adopts a similar definition of sustainability.

Research Question

This monograph seeks to answer whether USG development projects in Afghanistan are sustainable. In so doing, it examines the concept of sustainability, the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* and U.S. doctrine and foreign assistance policy. Next, this

⁷ USAID/Afghanistan website, "USAID projects by province, Afghanistan Provinces, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx> (accessed 26 November 2010).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Foreign aid can be dispensed in the form of short-term (humanitarian) assistance, i.e. emergency food, medicine, water, and shelter. Here, the goal is to stabilize crisis situations. Aid can also be provided as long-term (development) assistance in the form of direct cash transfers from a donor government or donor institution to a recipient country (usually in the form of grants or low-interest loans). The aim is to achieve long-term growth by developing democracy and governance, health systems, infrastructure, education, etc." Art Keller, "Ailing Aid," *Foreign Policy*, February 24, 2011, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/24/ailing_aid (accessed February 26, 2011).

¹⁰ "Persistent conflict is the protracted confrontation among state, nonstate, and individual actors that are increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends." FM 5-0: The Operations Process, March 2010, 3-4.

monograph analyzes how USG development projects are currently being viewed and used by Afghans in two provinces/PRTs: Nangarhar and Laghman. The analysis will focus on the main reasons Afghans are not using or maintaining USG-funded projects in these provinces. This necessitates an examination of whether CERP and USAID-funded projects in both provinces are designed and implemented in ways that encourage an Afghan willingness to maintain the projects in the long term. In so doing, it views these projects through the eyes of those personnel who have worked to create and implement them. Next, this monograph will examine USG-funded development and sustainability historically, drawing linkages between past success in the Balkans and current operations in Afghanistan. Finally, the monograph considers whether development in Afghanistan will likely be sustainable.¹¹

Research Background

Research for this monograph came from a variety of sources. Audits to Congress from the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) and reports from both the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Congressional Research Service (CRS) were the source of a lot of the data on the implementation and execution of projects and programs in Afghanistan using CERP and USAID funding. In addition, interviews were conducted with personnel who worked and lived in Afghanistan, most of whom oversaw or implemented these projects. Finally, the author directly observed development activities conducted by U.S. civilian and military counterparts throughout Afghanistan from 2007 until 2008 as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer posted to the USAID Mission in Kabul, Afghanistan.

¹¹ Although this monograph does not address the appropriateness of the military's role in development activities, a separate monograph in itself, it is concerned with whether or not long-term development, implemented in stable post-conflict environments by design, can ever be sustainable in an active war-zone.

Afghans are not Using or Maintaining USG-Funded Development Projects in Nangarhar and Laghman Provinces for Three Main Reasons

Data taken from various governmental and nongovernmental audits and reports suggest that the level of violence in the operating environment of any individual PRT determines whether sustainable development can be implemented there. In other words, where the provincial security situation is non-permissive, requiring continuous kinetic operations to counteract violence, long-term development cannot take place. Where the provincial security situation is permissive, or non-violent, long-term development gains can be achieved. Between these two extremes, the struggle between security and long-term development in a war zone appears to weigh heavily in favor of limited development where the provincial security situation is semi-permissive, or unsafe (i.e. when there are random periods of violence interspersed with periods of nonviolence and vice versa). Thus, the absence or existence of violence at any PRT has been critical in determining the achievement or failure of long-term development gains in Afghanistan. Afghan recipients of USG-funded development assistance either use or refuse to use and maintain projects and services in these provinces accordingly.

The three main reasons for Afghan national's lack of usage and maintenance of USG-funded projects and services in Nangarhar and Laghman are categorized as follows: (1) they have ill feelings toward the U.S. and/or align with the Taliban (this group lives in Taliban-controlled non-permissive districts); (2) they do not support the Taliban but the projects are in Taliban-influenced semi-permissive districts and they feel unsafe using the services; or (3) they support USG efforts and live in permissive districts but with little or no input from Afghans in the design and planning of the projects, the projects are viewed as foreign-provided services and therefore are not being maintained. The first two reasons are primarily based on where the services are located (cultural, ethnic and ideological influence of the village, district, province, region) and/or

the potential for insurgent violence in those locations (non-permissive and semi-permissive environments). The third reason presumes a permissive operating environment where development projects can be implemented. It deals with whether Afghan buy-in is obtained prior to design and implementation of the CERP or USAID-funded projects to ensure the services are shaped to local Afghan conditions. Nangarhar and Laghman are illustrative as both provinces are located in a geographic region that is considered semi-permissive. Strategically located in eastern Afghanistan amid Pashtun-dominated ethnic and cultural influences,¹² both provinces have experienced incidences of violence in several districts throughout the course of the USG's military and development efforts in country. PRTs in both provinces are therefore subjected to random acts of violence or periods of nonviolence as they implement development projects in the districts.

As a result of Taliban influence and presence in both provinces, the USG has injected over \$100 million in Nangarhar since 2009 and over \$53 million in Laghman since 2010.¹³ The aim is to weaken Taliban influence and set the conditions for the Afghan Government to gain local and national legitimacy by developing government institutions so that all Afghans can feel safe if they used the services. Due to the infusion of these development funds and the implementation of projects during nonviolent periods, both provinces have experienced limited development gains. Yet, despite these benefits, the generally unsafe operational environment in both provinces impedes PRT members from coordinating with local Afghans on new project selection and design, and overseeing and monitoring those projects that are in progress. Thus, not

¹² Pashtuns are the largest and traditionally most politically powerful ethnic group in Afghanistan. Pashtuns in southern Afghanistan (and northwestern Pakistan) consider themselves allied with the Taliban who are from the south. Taliban influence has been extended out of its traditional stronghold to the east, north and west of Afghanistan.

¹³ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-7, "Commander's Emergency Response Program in Laghman Province Provided Some Benefits, but Oversight Weaknesses and Sustainment Concerns, Led to Questionable Outcomes and Potential Waste." January 2011.

only are PRT members unable to design culturally aware projects to obtain the necessary buy-in, but they are also not able to observe and evaluate the project's progress to ensure the USG and the Afghans are getting contractually agreed upon services.

Unlike the situation in the Balkans during the 1990s when USG development efforts were conducted in a pre-negotiated, post-conflict environment, development projects in both of these provinces have been implemented when conditions were unsafe and subject to violence at any time. The secure and stable environment of post-war Bosnia and Kosovo was conducive to enabling USG personnel to work closely with Host Nation officials and other local nationals to design, plan, evaluate, and monitor projects steeped in the cultural and ideological mores and norms of the society. Given the progress of long-term development projects in Bosnia and Kosovo,¹⁴ similar planning and a similar operating environment should have formed the basis for long-term development in Afghanistan. As a result of the semi-permissive environment in Nangarhar and Lagham, limited as opposed to sustainable development has been the result of USG efforts in both provinces. An assumption can be made that since many USG-funded development projects are implemented in similar semi-permissive operational environments throughout Afghanistan, they will not be sustainable and therefore fail to achieve USG objectives.

Why address Sustainability of USG-funded Projects in Afghanistan?

The USG's overall strategic objective of disrupting, dismantling and defeating al-Qaeda to prevent its rise in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) is undergirded by the need to reconstruct and strengthen Afghanistan's governance structures so that the Afghan people will use (and legitimize) the structures and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA)

¹⁴ Bosnia is well on its way to Euro-Atlantic integration as a result of economic projects implemented since 1996. In less than a decade after its conflict, Kosovo has transitioned from a break-away republic to an independent sovereign state due to democracy and governance and rule of law programs created since 1999.

will maintain them. Sustainability in democracy and governance, rule of law, education, health, and economic growth projects is therefore a critical component of the USG effort in achieving enduring outcomes in Afghanistan. In support of this effort, USAID has awarded over \$11.5 billion in development assistance programs in Afghanistan since 2002.¹⁵ Since 2004, the U.S. military has received nearly \$2.64 billion for CERP projects in Afghanistan.¹⁶ At the forefront of USG long-term development implementation, the U.S. military and USAID are often cited by SIGAR and GAO for poor performance management, weak oversight, and not obtaining Afghan provincial and/or national government buy-in for development projects. Given the amount of U.S. taxpayer dollars spent on development projects in Afghanistan, and the commensurate expectations for success, larger issues related to the sustainability of these projects must be highlighted.

First, the USG entered Afghanistan without a clearly defined strategic end state. After the September 11, 2001 attack on America, the desire to wage war appeared to supplant prudent analysis of the potential long-term effects resulting from an invasion and regime removal. In an address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American people on the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF),¹⁷ then U.S. President George W. Bush stated, “Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is

¹⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, Testimony, “*USAID Continues to Face Challenges in Managing and Overseeing U.S. Development Assistance Programs*,” <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10932t.pdf> (accessed February 25, 2011).

¹⁶ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-7, p ii.

¹⁷ OEF refers to the war in Afghanistan, which is a joint and combined U.S., United Kingdom and Afghan operation with the aim to remove the Taliban from power and cripple al-Qaeda and associated militants in Afghanistan and other locations.

no refuge or no rest.”¹⁸ Thus, at the war’s commencement, success was to be measured by tactical metrics attained on the battlefield, the number of training facilities destroyed and enemies killed or captured. Omitted was a strategic plan for counterinsurgency, post-conflict peacekeeping and post-war reconstruction and development.

Second, the lack of a national strategy directly resulted in the lack of operational level planning and guidance by most of the agencies working in Afghanistan. Thus, many agencies, including the military, did not have clearly delineated objectives that nested into an overall desired national end state. The goals and aim of OEF were revised numerous times during the course of the war, displaying the friction in crafting a strategy that could marry the Bush Administration’s emergent war aims with broader, longer-term strategic considerations.¹⁹ It also revealed the continuously changing circumstances on the battlefield and the need to constantly reassess and reexamine such changes and their impact on USG activities. For instance, the insurgents’ success in using asymmetric warfare against coalition nations at will while blending into and engaging local civilian populations for food, shelter, and medical care, added a population-centered complication that required a decisive solution. As policy makers recognized America and its coalition allies could not win the war through military might alone, a “Whole of Government” approach, using all of the instruments of national power to rebuild Afghanistan, was soon adopted. This approach would allow the USG’s diplomatic, informational, economic and development tools to be used in concert with the military in order to achieve national objectives.²⁰ As a result of the lack of readily available diplomats skilled in dispensing foreign

¹⁸ President George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People” (lecture, United States Capitol, Washington, DC, September 20, 2001), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

¹⁹ Carl Conetta, “Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War.” (Research Monograph #6, Project on Defense Alternatives, January 2002), <http://www.comw.org/pda/0201strangevic.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

²⁰ Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy recognized the need for using the full range of U.S. national power against insurgents during the Vietnam War. He noted, “Pure military skill is not enough. A

assistance, the U.S. military was tasked to implement development projects throughout Afghanistan. Going it alone without formal training or operational guidance, the military used CERP to execute quick impact projects in an ad hoc manner. These projects were largely implemented to achieve short term security (either self-protection or force protection) in lieu of long-term sustainability.²¹

Third, the top-heavy senior management structure in Kabul and Washington, spanning across two or more civilian agencies, and unaccountable to one another, tended to confuse PRT staff and stymied the implementation of long-term development projects. Many of the managers would routinely issue separate and divergent directives postulating different agendas, some of which were counterproductive to long-term development. All of the managers required each project to be cleared through them individually. When USAID's diplomats arrived in Afghanistan and began to coordinate with the military, national caveats and the impetus to implement projects per managerial request as well as the non-permissive environment, dictated that the tenets of the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* would have to be set aside initially. The political expediency of designing projects in this type of working environment superseded traditional long-term development norms. Therefore, most of the proposed projects did not nest into an overall strategic vision and, at times, maintained the same ad hoc fashion of early CERP development projects. This reality, coupled with staff confusion regarding the chain of command among the numerous Ambassadors, USAID Front Office

full spectrum of military, para-military and civil action must be blended to produce success. The enemy uses economic and political warfare, propaganda and naked military aggression in an endless combination to oppose a free choice of government, and suppress the rights of the individual by terror, by subversion and by force of arms. To win in this struggle, our officers and [service] men must understand and combine the political, economic and civil actions with skilled military efforts in the execution of the mission." President John F. Kennedy, "Letter to the United States Army," April 11, 1962, quoted in Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. JCS, 20 March 2009), I-5, [Online] available from http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf#search=%22JP%201%22 (accessed 24 November 2010).

²¹ Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified, a United States Institute of Peace Special Report* (Washington, DC, 2005).

personnel, and Special Advisors and Envoys in Kabul and Washington only served to confound any clear strategic mandate for development. Operating in such an environment, PRT members often instituted projects in accordance with the whims of high-ranking personnel in Washington and Kabul, and not necessarily the Afghan nationals that would benefit from the use of the services and maintain them in the long-term.

Fourth, challenges existed due to limited capacity on the part of GIRoA Ministries to maintain many of the projects in the long term as well as the siphoning of a significant amount of the money set aside for reconstruction and development. As noted, the United States has invested more than \$300 billion in support of both military and development efforts in Afghanistan since 2001. In 2009, USAID evaluated the capacity of 14 out of 19 GIRoA Ministries and organizations that USAID works with as 1 or 2 on a scale of 5.²² 1 represented the need for substantial assistance across all areas while 2 represented needing technical assistance to perform all but routine functions. 5 represented the ability to perform without assistance. While USAID has included and highlighted capacity building in its PRT-based development projects, not one ministry or organization has ever achieved a rating of 5.²³ Although gains have been made in building GIRoA and provincial government capacity, much remains to be done. This includes capacity building of police and armed forces, both of which are critical to Afghanistan's overall security environment. While improvements have been made regarding corruption, far less progress has been made than was expected. Although development projects were designed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, USAID's independent *Assessment of Corruption in Afghanistan* found that pervasive, entrenched, and systemic corruption was so

²² United States Government Accountability Office, Testimony, "*USAID Continues to Face Challenges in Managing and Overseeing U.S. Development Assistance Programs*," p 8.

²³ Ibid.

significant that it undermined security, development, and democracy-building objectives.²⁴ According to a report issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 59 percent of Afghans polled identified corruption as the greatest problem facing the country, ranking it higher than security (54 percent) and unemployment (52 percent).²⁵ The report indicates that in a one year period, Afghan citizens paid \$2.5 billion in bribes, a quarter of the country's total gross domestic product.²⁶ "The Afghans say that it is impossible to obtain a public service without paying a bribe," UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa wrote on UNODC's website. Mr. Costa notes that corruption can be found at the highest levels of the Afghan government. While Afghanistan has or is developing the institutions needed to combat corruption, these institutions are limited by a lack of capacity, internal friction, and an unwillingness to prosecute corruption at the highest levels.

Finally, it is a well understood among development professionals that nations struggling to reconstruct and rebuild the core foundations of society should do so in a post-war environment with a decisive or negotiated end to hostilities. This has been the basic operating environment for those civilian agencies whose aim is to assist post-conflict countries in reconstructing the foundations of government. With the exception of the Vietnam War, USG development personnel were not cleared to conduct long-term operations of any type in a non-permissive environment, particularly during ongoing conflict. However, with the advent of the PRT, this is no longer a hard and fast rule. While civilian-military (civ-mil) coordination in providing emergency humanitarian aid during conflict is not new, implementing long-term development in

²⁴ United States Agency for International Development, *Assessment of Corruption in Afghanistan*, Special Report (Washington, DC: ,Jan-March 2009). http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO248.pdf (accessed 11 March 2011).

²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims*, Special Report (New York, NY Jan 2010).

²⁶ Ibid., p 4.

an active war zone is a fairly recent dynamic.²⁷ At present, the U.S. military conducts certain types of development projects and works closely with USAID to implement them. The requirement that military forces not only implement USG foreign assistance but also serve as protection for USG civilians as they do, evinces a paradigm shift in the dispensing of USG-funded long-term development assistance. It is clear that friction exists in commencing and completing sustainable development projects side by side with combat units engaging in kinetic operations. On one hand, sustainable development cannot take place unless the recipient population views development as a legitimate option in lieu of violence and/or support of violence.²⁸ On the other hand, sustainable development in war zones cannot occur without the security that armed forces afford.²⁹ While both USG civilian and military personnel are mandated to conduct long-term development projects in Afghanistan (and Iraq), these are not optimal conditions under which to do so.³⁰ Non-permissive and semi-permissive operational environments in various Afghan provinces pose challenges to project implementation. The consequences of working in such environments vary from (1) limiting the movement and ability of PRT personnel to meet, establish relationships, and obtain project buy-in from local and national Afghan government officials, to (2) reducing PRT members' ability to directly observe,

²⁷ The sole exception prior to current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq was the Vietnam War. Then U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara linked aid dispensed by USG civilians and the U.S. military there, advising that "the foreign aid program ... and the military assistance program [have] now become the most critical element[s] of our overall national security effort." Further, then U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson added that the foreign aid program was "the best weapon we have to ensure that our own men in uniform need not go into combat." "The Peak of Prestige: Foreign Aid under Kennedy," Answers.com, <http://www.answers.com/topic/foreign-aid> (accessed February 26, 2011).

²⁸ Andrew S. Natsios, U.S. Foreign Policy and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Humanitarian Relief in Complex Emergencies (The Washington Papers) (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Paperback, 1997)

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ David S. Cloud, "Gates Warns Against Future Land Wars Like Iraq, Afghanistan," Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2011. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gates-speech-20110226,0,2959567.story?track=rss> (accessed February 26, 2011). U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, "In my opinion, any future Defense Secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should have his head examined."

monitor, and evaluate projects to (3) extending performance timeframes and increasing costs for projects to (4) causing the delay, disruption, and eventual abandonment of reconstruction and development projects.

While indications suggest that Afghan nationals are not using or maintaining USG-funded development projects and services, the overarching issues to those cited in SIGAR, GAO and CRS reports, as outlined above, account for this lack of sustainability. These issues impact long-term development projects implemented by the USG throughout the Afghan state and place into question the idea of attaining sustainability in this particular operating environment.

A Framework for the Modern Conception of Sustainability in Development

With very few exceptions, the concept of development is largely agreed upon by the international community. However, the concept of *sustainability* in development, as put forth by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the 1990s, is not settled. Given the number of actors in the development world, and the diverse circumstances encountered in any particular country or region, a shared global definition of sustainability does not exist. However, similar themes relating to the environment, the economy, society, or some combination of these three, permeate the various definitions that do exist.

Definitions

The concept of development was postulated in Bjorn Hettne's seminal report, *Development Theory and the Third World*, in which he identifies the environment and the "indigenization of development" as being critical for success. Indigenization requires development programs and projects to be designed and implemented in accordance with the actual culture and priorities of the recipient nation. Thus, as a group, development practitioners recognize the need for culturally aware development design and implementation that meshes with the recipient nation's mores and norms. This alignment of culture with service ground-truths

projects so as to shape the conditions for the recipient nation's people and government to use and maintain the services in the long-term. Yet the concept of indigenization is not always incorporated into the actual projects or services. In such cases, development projects are designed and implemented without considering the recipient nation's culture, mores or norms. When this occurs, such projects lead to limited development gains or abandonment by the recipient nation. In many cases where there are linkages between the projects and recipient nation's culture, development practitioners have expended substantial time and effort making the projects appear in alignment with the donor nation's culture and national caveat. While this is a major issue in international development, it is a far bigger issue than can be addressed in this monograph.

The UNDP invented the term 'sustainable human development' in order to identify development as being human-centered. UNDP's initial annual *Human Development Report*, launched in 1990, placed people at the center of the development process.³¹ For the first time, sustainability looked beyond income and focused on people's long-term well-being: "People must be at the centre of all development. The purpose of development is to offer people more options. [Options include] long life, knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation and guaranteed human rights."³² Many nations, particularly those in the West, have promoted the idea of viewing development and sustainability through the lens of the individual local national who would utilize and maintain the projects and services long after their creation.

Sustainability, at its most basic, is the ability to "endure without giving way or yielding; to supply with food, drink, and other necessities of life; to provide for (an institution or the like)

³¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1990* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, USA, 1990), iii.

³² Ibid.

by furnishing means or funds.”³³ Many practitioners agree that sustainability is a continuous process, based on the ever evolving needs of particular operational environments, but one that endures³⁴ (i.e. when local populations can self-provide the technical, fiscal and human resources and upkeep of the projects and services and are willing to do so in the long-term).

The connection between sustainability and development is in designing, building and implementing projects and services that embody the culture and mores of the recipient nation so that the local population can and will use, buy-in, and maintain them in the long-term. For example, the construction of a school for children at any grade level requires a dire need and “buy-in” or strong support from local authorities and the local community. This includes the willingness on part of the community to permanently staff the school with teachers. It also includes the local commitment of resources to purchase locally available equipment and supplies that are necessary to maintain the school in the long-term. For the development practitioner, these circumstances ensure long-term employment of teachers and continuous education of children as well as consistent support to the local economy. More importantly, it highlights the notion of sustainable development.

Development is "sustainable" when it permanently builds a nation's capacity to improve its quality of life. It is represented by societal growth that “respects and safeguards the economic, cultural, and natural environment; that creates many incomes and chains of enterprises; that is nurtured by an enabling environment; that builds indigenous institutions that involves and empowers the citizenry, and that does not exhaust the resources of a host country.”³⁵ In this way,

³³ Dictionary.com, Sustainability,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sustainability> (accessed November 29, 2010).

³⁴ Andy Tamas, *Warriors and Nation Builders: Development and the Military in Afghanistan* (Winnipeg, Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), 16.

³⁵ Ibid.

sustainable development increases “freedom and opportunity, not only day to day but generation to generation.”³⁶

Sustainable development requires “investments in human capital—in the education, health, food security, and well-being of the population.”³⁷ When this occurs, changes take place in that society that mandate participation in “institutions of free discourse and inclusive decision-making.”³⁸ Sustainable development must encompass the hope, goals, and experience of ordinary people and their idea of the problems that should be addressed.³⁹ In short, sustainable development must “involve, respond to, and be accountable to the people” who will use and maintain donor nation’s development efforts.⁴⁰

The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development

The concept of sustainability is grounded in U.S. foreign assistance policy and U.S. military doctrine. In both the May 2005 special edition of USAID’s *Frontlines* magazine and the Autumn 2005 edition of *Parameters*, then USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios promulgated the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development*.⁴¹ These principles, modeled after the *Nine Principles of War*, lead the design, build and implementation of USG development and reconstruction assistance. USAID, the lead USG agency for administering civilian foreign aid, uses these principles as the main tenets for the execution of U.S. foreign assistance globally. These principles are seen as essential to the success of assistance as a U.S. foreign policy and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Andy Tamas, *Warriors and Nation Builders: Development and the Military in Afghanistan* (Winnipeg, Ontario: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), 16.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Andrew Natsios, “Notes from Natsios: Nine Principles of Development and Reconstruction Assistance,” *USAID: Frontlines*, May 2005, 12 http://www.usaid.gov/press/frontlines/fl_may05/may05_fl.pdf (accessed December 5, 2010).

national security tool.⁴² Forged by decades of practical experience, the principles are not a checklist; instead, they summarize the qualities required to achieve successful development aims and goals. The principles are:

Ownership

Build on the leadership, participation, and commitment of a country and its people.

Capacity-Building

Strengthen local institutions, transfer technical skills, and promote appropriate policies.

Sustainability

Design programs to ensure their impact endures.

Accountability

Design accountability and transparency into systems and build effective checks and balances to guard against corruption.

Assessment

Conduct careful research, adapt best practices, and design for local conditions.

Results

Focus resources to achieve clearly defined, measurable and strategically-focused objectives.

⁴² Andrew Natsios, “Notes from Natsios: Nine Principles of Development and Reconstruction Assistance,” *USAID: Frontlines*, May 2005, 12
http://www.usaid.gov/press/frontlines/fl_may05/may05_fl.pdf (accessed December 5, 2010).

Partnership

Collaborate closely with governments, communities, donors, NGOs, the private sector, international organizations, and universities.

Flexibility

Adjust to changing conditions, take advantage of opportunities, and maximize efficiency.

Selectivity

Allocate resources based on need, local commitment, and foreign policy interests.

Sustainability, defined as, “design(ing) programs to ensure their impact endures,” is a bedrock principle for the development community and weighs heavily in the decision-making process to implement a particular project.

The U.S. Army’s *FM 3-07: Stability Operations, Appendix C: USAID Principles for Reconstruction and Development* states the following: “The sustainability principle compels aid managers to consider whether the technology, institution, or service they are introducing will have a lasting effect on a society. When implementing the program, [the goal is to] strive for attaining long-term sustainability, even when circumstances dictate short-term solutions to immediate conditions.” This doctrinal language is also encapsulated within the tenets of the stability operations portion of COIN.

In addition to this, both the *CERP Handbook* and the *PRT Handbook* outline and recommend use of the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development*. *Appendix A: Principles for Project Selection* of the *CERP Handbook* specifically advises commanders to ensure that the lessons learned and best practices of the development community are incorporated when selecting and prioritizing CERP projects to the maximum extent possible. The *Handbook* articulates that the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* guide the development

community and are similar to the military's application of the *Nine Principles of War*. The *Handbook* states, "Just as military officers improve their likelihood of mission accomplishment by adhering to the principles of mass, objective, offensive, etc., development officials improve their probability of success by applying the principles of reconstruction and development and assume risk in their missions and programs when they violate or ignore these principles."

Further, the *CERP Handbook* defines sustainability as designing and selecting only those projects and services that will have an enduring effect on the local population. Accordingly, it counsels commanders that the projects under consideration must endure after the facility or service is turned over to local national authorities and the unit or contractor departs. The *Handbook* contends that sustainability implies that the local government has the resources necessary to staff and maintain the facility or service. As a result, the *CERP Handbook* also recommends that commanders "[s]eek the advice, opinion, and feedback of local authorities to ensure that they can adequately staff and maintain the projects under consideration."

The *PRT Handbook* outlines the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* as its "Guiding Principles." "The primary activities of the PRT are to conceive, plan, coordinate, and/or execute reconstruction and initial development projects and programs. Though PRTs are not development institutions per se, PRTs should adhere to the...development communities' principles to the extent possible." Thus, all USG personnel assigned to a PRT in Afghanistan, are advised to adhere to the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development*, including sustainability, when designing, building, and implementing reconstruction and development projects.

As noted previously, both U.S. civilian policy and military doctrine adhere to the *Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development* to inform all USG-funded development efforts Afghanistan-wide. It is well-recognized among development practitioners and civ-mil PRT personnel that sustainability undergirds the design, build, and implementation of long-term development projects in Afghanistan. For the USG, sustainable development is the main effort in

ensuring that the Afghan people buy-in to GIRoA institutions and abstain from violence or support of violence. This is particularly the case in the provinces/PRTs led by USG personnel. However, the realities of a semi-permissive and insecure operational environment routinely get in the way.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)

The *PRT Handbook* advises that a PRT is “a joint, integrated military-civilian organisation, staffed and supported by ISAF⁴³ member countries, operating at the provincial level within Afghanistan. PRTs seek to establish an environment that is stable enough for the local...authorities, international agencies, non-government agencies and civil society to engage in reconstruction, political transition and social and economic development.” Additionally, PRTs widen the reach of development projects and services beyond urban areas to remote hinterlands in the country. This reach also enables GIRoA to extend its authority to these places and deters insurgents by fostering a more secure and stable environment.⁴⁴

Afghanistan, carved into 34 provinces, has 27 PRTs. Thirteen PRTs fall under U.S. Commanders, the others, under an ISAF coalition country. ISAF PRTs are situated in relatively stable areas in the north and west of Afghanistan. U.S. PRTs are located in the volatile southern and eastern regions along the Pakistan border. Accordingly, U.S. PRTs are co-located with Coalition combat units that conduct COIN operations against Taliban, al-Qaeda, and similar groups and handle other security threats involving armed militias, drug trafficking, and simmering tribal disputes.⁴⁵ Of the U.S.-led PRTs, ten fall under a Brigade Commander who in

⁴³ ISAF is the International Security Assistance Force, a coalition of nations that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

⁴⁴ Of note, in nearly every Afghan province, the civil affairs teams from a U.S. battalion develops projects to assist soldiers in the field. These projects occur outside of the PRT structure although they are borne of CERP funds.

⁴⁵ Carter Malkasian and Gerald Meyerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work?* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 3-5.

turn, falls under Regional Command-East (RC-E), the U.S. divisional command.⁴⁶ The average U.S.-led PRT is comprised of nearly 100 personnel. Military officers cover the intelligence, operations and supply branches at one each and civil affairs at three to eight Army officers. There is also a platoon of +/- 40 National Guard soldiers as well as two engineers.⁴⁷ Civilian representative(s), usually diplomat(s) from USAID, and/or the Departments of Agriculture and State, are also present. All of these personnel combine to form the core of a U.S.-led PRT.

In order to achieve the aim of establishing a stable and secure environment for all coalition and friendly organizations, institutions and local populations living and working in Afghanistan, a PRT must fulfill two requirements: (1) meet regularly with village, district and provincial Afghan leaders, and (2) design, plan and implement development projects. In the meetings, matters discussed range from past, current and future PRT projects, tribal disputes, and all other issues affecting the province or district, including U.S. military and NATO-led operations.⁴⁸ With development projects, U.S. PRTs can access the U.S. military's CERP funds and USAID's Local Governance and Community Development Fund (LGCDF). CERP allows a PRT Commander to spend \$100,000 per month quickly, sans bureaucratic interference, on development projects.⁴⁹ Alternatively, LGDF funds, in the millions, must adhere to stringent Congressional reporting rules. Thus, all decisions to spend these monies require consent from both the USAID Mission in Kabul and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul prior to PRT action. This ensures a lengthy approvals process for development projects..

Unlike earlier PRTs which focused on quick impact projects, PRTs now focus on large-scale reconstruction and development, the construction of schools, roads, and bridges that

⁴⁶ The U.S. Army Divisions that have made annual transfers of authority in this role are 10th Mountain, 82nd Airborne, and 101st Airborne.

⁴⁷ Carter Malkasian and Gerald Meyerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work?* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 3-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Afghans can use and maintain in the long-term. As funding for such projects increased, the scale and scope of the projects increased as well. The majority of spending has been in those provinces/areas that are still contested (generally non-permissive) but where insurgents cannot move freely. Projects have also been completed in stable, permissive areas, but relatively fewer than in the contested areas. Yet, PRT personnel are stymied by the non-permissive environment. According to a GAO report, in remote and Taliban-controlled areas, PRTs are unable to meet with Afghan local and national government officials and/or observe and inspect projects to ensure that locally hired contractors abide by the contract and, for example, do not withhold needed materials.⁵⁰ Eighty-one people involved in foreign assistance activities were killed in 2004. During fiscal year 2004, 70 attacks directly affected USAID programs, causing delays in reconstruction projects. For example, equipment was damaged, work was delayed, and construction workers were kidnapped, injured, and/or killed by insurgent forces attacking USAID's highway construction project. In addition, secondary road projects, agricultural training programs, the distribution of vaccines and medicines, and the construction of schools and clinics, among other reconstruction projects, were delayed or terminated because of attacks.⁵¹ In a large number of cases, quality control and building maintenance were lacking. For those projects initiated without feedback and buy-in from Afghan leaders, those buildings, roads, and bridges developed structural problems, became unusable, or simply collapsed altogether.⁵² As Arnold Fields, the former SIGAR, noted, "unless and until we address these serious sustainability issues,

⁵⁰ United States General Accounting Office, Report, "AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION: Despite Some Progress, Deteriorating Security and Other Obstacles Continue to Threaten Achievement of U.S. Goals," <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05742.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2011).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² David Francis, "U.S. Can't Account For Billions Spent in Afghanistan," *Fiscal Times*, December 27, 2010. <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2010/12/27/US-Cant-Account-for-Billions-Spent-in-Afghanistan.aspx> (accessed March 3, 2010).

we will continue to invest millions of U.S. tax dollars in projects that will fall into disrepair once transferred to the Afghan government and our investment will have been wasted.”⁵³

The required meetings to dialog and provide feedback with leaders at all levels of the Afghan government should be used to inform the design and build of the development projects within any PRTs particular province or district. Critically, it is at this nexus that the cultural and ideological mores of Afghan society is used to shape development projects and get buy-in for long-term Afghan maintenance.⁵⁴ For example, Afghans in a particular village or district may not agree to educate females similarly to males but may agree to establish female dorms where Afghan females can train young women on female healthcare issues, home economics, and family care. Negotiations and concessions with Afghan leaders at the outset allows the leaders to have a voice in societal changes in their community and paves the way to long-term maintenance and security of the physical structure itself. Importantly, it also allows Afghan females in that district to begin the path to broader education objectives. However, such meetings to ground-truth projects to Afghan cultural norms cannot take place in provinces that are non-permissive, violence-prone and/or Taliban-controlled. Indeed, it can only be done in a limited fashion in those areas that are semi-permissive and marked by periods of intermittent violence and peace..

PRT/Nangarhar

Nangarhar Province is located in eastern Afghanistan, on the Pakistan border. Migration flows in both directions, characterizing a porous border. Its capital city, Jalalabad, serves as the

⁵³ SIGAR News Release, “SIGAR Contract Audit Shows \$49.2 Million at Risk of Waste,” SIGAR Public Affairs Office, January 27, 2011. <http://www.sigar.mil/PressRelease27Jan2011.asp> (accessed March 3, 2011).

⁵⁴ It should be noted that the GIRoA has its own development programs. The largest is the National Solidarity Program (NSP) falling under the aegis of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Its goal is to link local villages throughout Afghanistan with the central government in Kabul. Villages that receive grants from the NSP form a community development council that decides which project should be implemented. A non-governmental organization supervises the project from design to implementation.

cultural, political and economic center of the eastern region. Strategically situated along a primary gateway for trade, it is the second highest revenue generating province in Afghanistan. Mountain ranges, forests, and the Khyber Pass are encapsulated within its environs. With a population of 1.8 million Afghans of primarily Pashtun ethnicity, it is Afghanistan's most densely populated province. Residents eke out a living by working in agriculture, animal husbandry, engaging in day labor or in the poppy trade. Prior to the influx of a contingent of NATO troops, poppy was cultivated in over 5 of its districts. As a result of eradication, wheat and other legal (or licit) crops are now being cultivated in those areas.

Given these Afghan's Pashtun ancestral lineage and similar religious and cultural heritage to the Taliban, Nangarhar has served as a safe-haven for Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgents. In fact, Osama bin Laden was cornered in the province during the 2001 Tora Bora campaign until he eventually escaped into neighboring Pakistan.

With respect to long-term development and the semi-permissive security situation, a few instances should be highlighted. At the beginning of 2008, four Afghans were abducted by insurgents as they were working on a PRT road building project in Kamdesh District. The four men were beheaded when their families could not pay the ransom. This terroristic act effectively halted construction on the Asmar-Kamdesh road. PRT personnel could not travel to the site and evaluate the level of progress nor could they contract with other personnel to ensure road completion. This incident revealed that the insurgents viewed U.S. and Afghan COIN efforts in this area as a threat to the insurgent's legitimacy. Further, it increased this largely Pashtun public's growing aversion to the Taliban's brutal tactics. In an attempt to stem this negative public opinion, one week after the Kamdesh decapitations, Mullah Muhammad Omar issued an edict stating that the Taliban would no longer execute "spies" by beheading, something which was seen as denigrating to Muslims.

In April 2008, U.S. and Afghan forces launched OPERATION MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY II to retake the Gowhardesh Bridge, which had been abandoned in August 2007 by contractors

and the PRT after several acts of terrorism by insurgents. The operation involved more than one hundred U.S. and Afghan soldiers. Its aim was to secure the bridge and adjacent valley by shaping the conditions so that the environment was stable enough to resume construction of the Asmar-Kamdesh road and to bring governance, jobs, and economic development to the area. For the first time, the troops were not attacked due to the combined force receiving pre-approval from the Kamdesh *shura*, which had travelled from village to village directing the locals not to fight. The threat of terrorist activity on a day-to-day basis is low in Nangarhar due to the existence of coalition forces. Yet, the security situation still remains semi-permissive and subject to violent acts at any time.

Currently, over 2,000 provincial aid projects are being designed, created, or implemented in the province at a cost of over \$19 million.⁵⁵ Of these, the PRT has planned to work on more than 50 total projects.⁵⁶ Yet USG-funded development projects are being implemented without a provincially-generated, GIRoA-endorsed development plan. Additionally, many USG-funded development projects in Nangarhar are not being sustained by GIRoA as GIRoA lacks visibility and input into USG development projects.⁵⁷

PRT/Laghman

Laghman Province is located in eastern Afghanistan, near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The province is bordered by Nuristan in the north, Kunar in the east, Nangarhar in the south, and Kabul and Kapisa in the west. Its capital city is Mehtar Lam. The majority of the province is mountainous with the Kashmund range framing its borders on the southeast and the

⁵⁵ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-1, “Weaknesses in Reporting and Coordination of Development Assistance and Lack of Provincial Capacity Pose Risks to U.S. Strategy in Nangarhar Province,” October 2010. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-7.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Kuhestan range rimming the province in the north. Known for its lushness, Laghman has cultivated land along river valleys and forested areas in several districts. Residents primarily work in agriculture and as day laborers yet also have jobs in local government.

With a population of over 380,000 people, most are of Pashtun ethnicity. The threat of terrorist activity is high in Laghman due to the Taliban and other insurgent groups who use the province as a transit into other provinces. In June 2005, three Pakistanis were arrested in Laghman for plotting to kill the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, while he was visiting the province for reconstruction efforts. The three men were found with various weapons. In April 2007, coalition forces killed Gul Haqqarast, a top Taliban commander in Laghman. In terms of public attitudes toward security, 38% of the population consider themselves unsafe.⁵⁸

Currently, over 1100 provincial aid projects are on-going in the province. Of these, the USG disbursed \$35 million of \$53.5 million in CERP funds for 69 projects.⁵⁹ Most of the CERP investment in Laghman are used for large-scale projects such as asphalt roads and new facilities. The asphalt road projects, totaling \$44.6 million, were at risk due to lack of maintenance plans with Afghans. More than \$3 million are at risk for new buildings that were completed but not being used as intended, or the construction was ongoing and GIRoA had not agreed to sustain the facilities after completion.⁶⁰

Demographic and economic factors in both provinces provide the Taliban and similar militias with a seemingly endless supply of poor, young, uneducated, unemployed, and easily

⁵⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims*, Special Report (New York, NY Jan 2010).

⁵⁹ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-7, "Commander's Emergency Response Program in Laghman Province Provided Some Benefits, but Oversight Weaknesses and Sustainment Concerns, Led to Questionable Outcomes and Potential Waste." January 2011.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

influenced young people, prime candidates for insurgent recruitment.⁶¹ Yet motivations based on economics rather than ideology also means that these young recruits could be separated from militias depending on the extent of USG efforts. PRT development projects are believed to have reduced insurgent operations by providing jobs to these youths, allowing tribal elders to gain the allegiance of locals from insurgents and creating an environment of economic development to make insurgent violence seem unnecessary.⁶² However, although PRT spending has increased dramatically, the spending on development activities has not decreased the level of violence throughout Afghanistan. It is important to look first at the USG's past experiences in development delivery in environments after hostilities have formally ceased.

The Nature of Sustainability: From the Balkans to Asia

In general, post-conflict development requires long-term commitment that necessitates implementation of security, humanitarian, economic, and democracy and governance projects and services. This "Whole of Government" approach has been conducted by the USG in the Balkans since the 1990s and more recently, in Afghanistan (and Iraq). Unlike Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Kosovo, armed forces under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployed to those conflicts at a negotiated end of hostilities. This allowed troops to shape the operational environments in Bosnia and Kosovo to render both permissive and secure for the USG's and other nation's civilian aid workers to design, build, and implement long-term development.

The conflict in Bosnia involved the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia, and Bosnia's three major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs). This conflict smoldered from 1992 through 1995. Each actor battled for control of key terrain in accordance with each group's

⁶¹ Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified, a United States Institute of Peace Special Report* (Washington, DC, 2005).

⁶² SIGAR News Release, "SIGAR Contract Audit Shows \$49.2 Million at Risk of Waste," SIGAR Public Affairs Office, January 27, 2011. <http://www.sigar.mil/PressRelease27Jan2011.asp> (accessed March 3, 2011), p 10.

definition of its own state. Over the course of the conflict, 2.3 million people were internally displaced or became refugees.⁶³ In July 1995, a month-long bombing campaign against Bosnian-Serb forces resulted in a cease-fire and negotiation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December. That same month, NATO-led troops deployed to enforce the military portion of the agreement and provide security for humanitarian aid⁶⁴ and reconstruction and development activities.

The conflict in the then “breakaway” Serbian province of Kosovo involved Yugoslavian security forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents fighting for Kosovo’s independence.⁶⁵ The conflict raged from early 1998 through mid-1999. In order to halt Yugoslav aggression (including random and targeted killings) and stop the flow of refugees, NATO initiated a bombing campaign against the former Yugoslavia in March 1999. NATO later deployed 50,000 troops to enforce compliance with cease-fire and withdrawal agreements and to shape conditions for humanitarian and reconstruction and development activities.⁶⁶

Working in post-conflict and permissive environments, the foreign assistance agencies of several NATO countries were better able to develop country- and regional-specific frameworks for long term impact in Bosnia and Kosovo. In 1999, the Bosnia- and Kosovo-specific programs were supplemented by the Stability Pact, which focused on “democratization, human rights, economic reconstruction, and security” throughout the region.⁶⁷ Reconstruction and development assistance following these armed conflicts were part of a comprehensive longer-term assistance

⁶³ United States General Accounting Office, Testimony, “Foreign Assistance: Observations On Post-Conflict Assistance in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan,” <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03980t.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2011).

⁶⁴ The aim of humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity. It is distinguished from development aid, which seeks to address the underlying socioeconomic factors which may have led to a crisis or emergency.

⁶⁵ United States General Accounting Office, Testimony, “Foreign Assistance: Observations On Post-Conflict Assistance in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan,” <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03980t.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2011).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

effort comprising humanitarian, military, economic, governance, and democracy-building measures.⁶⁸ Although the post-conflict situations in these locations have differed, they have similar attributes. Testimony from a GAO report highlighted that a secure environment, a strategic vision, and strong leadership are “the key components needed for effective implementation of assistance efforts.”⁶⁹ Additionally, there is a need for “sustained political commitment, adequate human and financial resources to carry out operations, coordinated assistance, and the support of the host government and civil society.”⁷⁰

In Bosnia and Kosovo, humanitarian and other civilian workers were generally able to perform their tasks because they were supported by large NATO-led forces. For example, in Bosnia, the NATO forces “enforced the cease-fire, ensured the separation and progressive reduction of the three ethnically based armies from more than 400,000 soldiers and militia to 20,000 by 2003, and disbanded paramilitary police units.”⁷¹ In Kosovo, the NATO-led force provided security by (1) ensuring that uniformed Yugoslav security forces withdrew from Kosovo as scheduled and remained outside the province and (2) monitoring the demilitarization and transformation of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Despite the relative security in these two locations, various paramilitaries continued to operate, and a few sporadic violent incidents occurred against international workers and the local population.⁷² Yet, sustainable development began occurring within Bosnia, Kosovo, and the region early on and largely without incident.

In contrast, throughout the conflict period in Afghanistan, personnel dispensing long-term development have been at risk “due to ongoing security problems caused by domestic terrorism,

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.4

⁷⁰ United States General Accounting Office, Testimony, “Foreign Assistance: Observations On Post-Conflict Assistance in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan,” <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03980t.pdf> (accessed February 27, 2011).

⁷¹ Ibid.,

⁷² Ibid.

long-standing rivalries among warlords, and the national government's lack of control over the majority of the country." ISAF troops operate in Kabul and surrounding semi-secure areas, while the vast majority of military personnel in the U.S.-led coalition force work in non-permissive and semi-permissive areas engaging in kinetic operations against the Taliban and other terrorist groups. To attain (and at times, maintain) a secure environment, offensive operations are often being conducted by these same troops while they work with USAID's diplomats to conduct long-term development. To do this, military units "clear" adversaries from a designated area, "hold" that area by maintaining a presence and providing around-the-clock security, and then assist to "build" the area through targeted development projects and services. The non-permissive security situation in areas where the U.S. military has not cleared or held a designated area is highlighted by random yet targeted terrorist attacks against the Afghan government, the Afghan people, and the international community, including the military and other personnel working from PRTs. The time required to build relationships with Afghans and to design projects and services that are culturally sensitive to local nationals in order for them to "buy-in" to maintaining them in the long-term, is not viable in semi-permissive areas. These non-optimal conditions frame the current operational environment and indicate a potential failure to institute sustainable development throughout Afghanistan.

Analysis of Modern Operations in Dispensing Development

As noted previously, Afghan's usage of USG-funded services in Nangarhar and Laghman can be categorized as follows:

(1) Afghans with ill feelings toward the U.S. who align with the Taliban given their shared Pashtun ancestral lineage and similar religious and cultural heritage (they tend to live in Taliban-controlled communities); or (2) Afghans that do not support the Taliban and would like to use USG projects but the services are in Taliban-influenced areas and they feel unsafe using the services; or (3) Afghans that support USG efforts but with little or no input from Afghans in

the design, build, and implementation of the projects, the services are viewed as foreign-provided services and are not being used and maintained.

Why does there exist such a disparate range of service use in the same nation, or at a micro-level, the same province? What accounts for this? Conventional wisdom highlights systemic features that shape Afghanistan's current strategic and operational environment: For instance, complex relationships between diverse and splintered tribes are undergirded by geographical and ethnic divisions and wariness built from centuries of conflict by outsiders. Also, national and provincial authority in Afghanistan bears little resemblance to the actual balance of interests and resources in and around the country.^{73 74} This encourages lack of local input from Afghans in the creation of projects which, in turn, renders the services "foreign" and therefore unusable;⁷⁵ Additionally, the lack of a robust central indigenous police or military force capable of exercising control over the country, allows the country to remain "a patchwork of fiefdoms and contested or lawless areas."⁷⁶ It also enables the struggle between militias and civilian authority to decisively favor the former.⁷⁷ This causes a constant state of consternation for the typical Afghan national wanting and even at times seeking services but unsure of who will be in control of their village or province from day-to-day.

More in-depth analysis of Afghan nationals use and/or maintenance of USG-funded development projects and services indicate the following:

⁷³ Carl Conetta, "Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War." (Research Monograph #6, Project on Defense Alternatives, January 2002), <http://www.comw.org/pda/0201strangevic.html> (accessed November 22, 2010).

⁷⁴ For enduring stability, the Afghan government should either be reflective of or balance the interests of the ethnic groups in the country.

⁷⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-2, "U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan is Progressing but Some Key Issues Merit Further Examination as Implementation Continues," October 2010.

⁷⁶ Conetta, "Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War." p 21.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

1.) Those Afghans not using these services because they have ill feelings toward the U.S. and/or align with the Taliban.

Afghans who share the same land and ethnic and cultural lineage as the Taliban, or similar insurgent groups, appear to side with the insurgents. Afghans located in predominately Pashtun areas have allowed insurgents, including al-Qaeda, to establish safe-havens from which to conduct acts of terrorism. These Afghans have lived among the insurgents in a particular village, district, province or region for many years. They share a similar ideological framework with respect to America and the coalition, seeing both as the enemy. These Afghans refuse to use USG-provided services almost as a matter of principle, adhering to the tenets of the Taliban zealously. As long as these Afghans do not accept or use the services, they will live among the insurgents in a relatively secure and stable environment. To the extent that any of them accept the services, the living environment can immediately be characterized as unsafe for them. For PRT personnel, such an operational environment would be considered non-permissive absent robust coalition force security measures.

2.) Those Afghans not using the services because the projects are in Taliban-controlled or influenced areas.

Some Afghans live in areas where USG-funded services are provided and are sorely needed but the existence of insurgent influence precludes them from using the services. To be clear, the Taliban or a similar militia is not physically present in the area, but has provided resources to the local community such that the community elders feel an allegiance to them. The average Afghan in these communities tends to side with the U.S. and the coalition but believe that their safety and well-being would be in jeopardy if they used and/or maintained USG-funded services. They believe that either the insurgents or members of their community would see them using the services and would mark them or their families for death. As a result, they refuse to use or maintain the services. Alternatively, they only use the services under set conditions. Namely, when the Taliban's influence has waned and they no longer appear to pose a threat. With respect

to PRT personnel, such a working environment would be considered semi-permissive, split between periods of peace and calm and the potential to go kinetic given Taliban influence.

3.) Afghans that support USG efforts but with little or no input from Afghans in the design and planning of the projects, the services are viewed as foreign-provided services and are not being used and maintained.

Since 2002, the majority of USG development assistance has been designed, built and managed by USG agencies, not the GIRoA. In 2010, the USG affirmed its commitment to increasing to 50% the assistance delivered through GIRoA as long as it “reduce[d] corruption, improved financial management and budget execution, and increase[d] the capacity of the central and provincial government agencies to deliver public services.”⁷⁸

A U.S. Foreign Service Officer, Jose Garzon, who worked as Chief of the Office of Democracy and Governance for USAID in Afghanistan from 2008 until 2009 advised that although he generally feels that Afghans will, “in most cases” use USG-funded programs and services in country, for some they may not. He notes in particular that at the operational level “the construction of court rooms and law buildings is defective in some cases.” At the strategic level, he bluntly advises the following:

The USG is not running the kind of operation that will lead to success. That operation will be highly decentralized and streamlined. Political and cultural resources would go together with financial and technical resources (in other words, we would spend a lot of time listening and brokering agreements, not just pouring concrete or throwing “mentors” at everyone. Currently, it seems [that those in higher USG positions] think that every problem can be solved by throwing lots of money [and] personnel [at it], contributing to the creation of a class of people living off of US largess[e] (e.g., those who rent buildings or own security firms) and waste. The chaotic and top heavy management structures, and the excessive emphasis on “whole of government” makes it difficult for people to do their jobs-for every person doing real work, it seems there are 5 supervisors...” Project approvals are overlapping and numerous...[i]t’s a

⁷⁸ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-1, “Weaknesses in Reporting and Coordination of Development Assistance and Lack of Provincial Capacity Pose Risks to U.S. Strategy in Nangarhar Province,” October 2010.

formula for waste and ineffectiveness. When you achieved results, it was in spite of the system, not because of it.”⁷⁹

In terms of the long-term viability of the Afghans maintaining (and therefore sustaining) these projects, he says this “depends” on which governmental entity would be funding the projects. At the national level, the Afghan Government has more resources. He indicates, “[J]ustice infrastructure, for example, is a national government responsibility. Local municipalities and governments have limited resources.”⁸⁰

Another U.S. Foreign Service Officer, Erik Pacific who also worked at the USAID Mission in Kabul and at several PRTs in Afghanistan from April 2008 until May 2010. During that time, he regularly witnessed the creation of community “centers constructed by USAID and the military (DoD).” He advised that while some of the centers are being used, “some remain vacant and/or house livestock.” He went on to state that “The [centers] that are being used will continue to be used as long as they are maintained. The ones that were used were the ones built in coordination with the central government based on need identified at the local level. Afghanistan has a very centralized central government system, and often PRTs would by-pass the central government and deal directly with the local government which was under capacitated and didn’t have the authority to make decisions on maintenance, funding, etc.” Accordingly, some [centers] are being maintained and will endure, “but some are not.”⁸¹

There are situations where the need for services is great but the Afghans’ lack of institutional capacity is evident. In these cases, USG officials harbor concerns about the ability of Afghans to maintain the services in the long-term. Elizabeth Chambers, a U.S. Foreign Service Officer worked at the USAID Mission in Kabul from August 2007 until October 2010. She

⁷⁹ Jose Garzon, USAID Foreign Service Officer, to Lorraine Sherman, Prishtina, 15 December 2010, Personal Files of Lorraine Sherman, New York, New York.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Erik Pacific, USAID Foreign Service Officer, to Lorraine Sherman, Skopje, 3 December 2010, Personal Files of Lorraine Sherman, New York, New York.

witnessed the construction of buildings, roads, (a) dam, and electricity generation center built with USAID funds. Specifically, she highlights the construction of the Darunta Dam in January 2008, a road in Faizabad in March 2008, and in Kabul, the Kabul Power Plant in April 2009 and dorms for women in August 2009. While neither the road nor dam had reached completion, the women's dorms and Kabul Power Plant were completed and were being used. She notes the following:

“While I was in Afghanistan, the USG provided the fuel even though the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) had planned to cover the costs. There was no money to cover the costs from the GIROA's budget, so USAID covered the cost.”⁸²

She mentioned that she believes Afghans will continue to use these services because “there is a need (i.e. electricity and housing) that is not being met otherwise.” However, she also noted that Afghans are not maintaining these services “as the USG is covering the costs.” She advised that “...development and “winning a war” are not necessarily compatible all the time” and hopes for “better coordination between the agencies” although “it has improved considerably...”⁸³

An Afghan from Khost province, Hameed Nazim, witnessed a variety of USG projects being implemented in his province and others from 2005 until 2008. His perspective is that of a citizen of Afghanistan and that of a former employee of the USAID Mission in Afghanistan. He advised,

I have noticed the creation [and] construction of numerous US government funded project[s] in Khost province, between the years 2005 - 2008 while I was living in Afghanistan. [The projects and services] are being used by [f]riends, relatives and the local community. I am pretty confident the local communities will continue to use them [as] they are maintained by the Afghan government. Although I do not agree with the way the US military conducts its operations in

⁸² Elizabeth Chambers, USAID Foreign Service Officer, to Lorraine Sherman, Phnom Penh, 12 December 2010, Personal Files of Lorraine Sherman, New York, New York.

⁸³ Ibid.

Afghanistan, I have no negative feelings about the U.S. I believe Afghanistan is in a far better state now, than it was a decade ago during the Mujahedeen (Warlords) and the Taliban regime. [M]ost of the buildings or services are funded by charity organizations and/or the generous American tax payer's money for the benefits of the [A]fghan people. I believe the people of Afghanistan should make the most use of [them].⁸⁴

Conclusion

At present, Afghans in two provinces critical to attaining USG objectives are not using or maintaining USG-funded projects and services because (1) they have ill feelings toward the U.S. and/or align with the Taliban; (2) they do not support the Taliban but the projects are in Taliban-influenced districts and they feel unsafe using the services; and (3) they support USG efforts and live in non-violent districts but have little or no input in the design and planning of the projects and so view the projects as foreign-provided services. In order to cultivate long-lasting peace and stability, USG interagency partners and foreign allies must be willing to not only engage in constant communication with the Afghan people and GIROA officials but also to adjust their ideals to Afghan realities and vice versa. This is the only way to consistently and continuously build partnership and achieve buy-in and consent among the Afghans for maintenance of U.S. development projects in the long-term. Yet, this cannot take place in non-permissive environments. Even semi-permissive provincial security environments pose nearly insurmountable challenges to sustainable development. The basic operating environment must be a permissive one in order for Afghans to use and maintain USG-funded projects in the long-term. Additionally, systemic issues, like the lack of Afghan capacity, endemic corruption, and bureaucratic confusion, all work to restrict PRT personnel from incorporating Afghan government officials in long-term project design, build and implementation. This leads to a lack of buy-in by the government which belies sustainability of these services in the long-term.

⁸⁴ Hameed Nazin, Network Engineer, to Lorraine Sherman, London, 15 December 2010, Personal Files of Lorraine Sherman, New York, New York.

Civilian and military cooperation in providing international aid is not new. Governments will continue to use their militaries to assist in humanitarian emergencies, because militaries are able to mobilize quickly to provide logistics and critical resources, such as food, medicine and fuel. Yet, the mandate to have civilians and military personnel serving side by side in non-permissive environments in order to dispense long-term development assistance should be carefully reviewed. Only then can the USG assess the success of sustainable development delivery in situations similar to Afghanistan that may arise in the future.

For the strategist, “[w]ar attains meaning only in the context of the strategic relations and conditions it affects, broadly considered. These effects are measured in terms of the fate of not only armies, states, and alliances, but people too.”⁸⁵ The effects of war on the fate of people are so intertwined with that of the ‘state’ as to be inseparable. At the commencement of OEF, it was necessary then to not only look at geopolitical disputes with Afghanistan’s Taliban regime and al Qaeda, but to also look internally at the friction between tribes and other internal actors. This required careful and detailed analysis of the operating environment, the actors, and their narratives. In this way, long-term development can be better positioned to have a positive and enduring impact on the host nation and its people.

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⁸⁵ Carl Conetta, “Strange Victory: A Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War” (Research Monograph #6, Project on Defense Alternatives, 2002), 3, in Commonwealth Institute, <http://www.comw.org/pda/0201strangevic.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2010).

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